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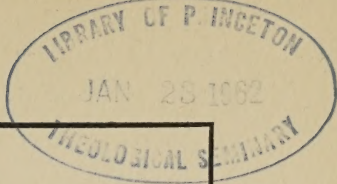
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In the shadow



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IN THE
SHADOW



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TO ALL
IN SICKNESS OR IN HEALTH
UPON WHOM THE SHADOW OF SORROW FALLS

“Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick.”

IN THE SHADOW

JUNE 23.—Yesterday will always be a marked day in my memory. For yesterday I found out. Now there will be no more uncertainty. Yesterday was like the clanging of a dreadful gate, shutting me out from all sweet, hopeful, changeful, misty uncertainties. Yesterday brought me out alone into a place so narrow, so small, so terribly enclosed that there is no room left for uncertainty.

Of course I knew I had been very ill. But I was supposed to be getting well again. Every one spoke as if I were getting well again. Now I wonder if they believe it, or if they know and pretend. But whether they know or not, they will not tell me. The biggest things in life remain untold until they are experienced. Perhaps this is humility. People trust the merciful laws that govern experience more than they trust their own wisdom. Or perhaps they do not trust, but are afraid, and imagine a dull indifference descends like a fog and blots the darksome reality out of sight.

There is no fog between me and the reality I face.

The laws that govern experience do not seem to me merciful, but dark and cruel.

I got up at eleven yesterday, because it seemed an outrage to lie in bed on such a day of glorious midsummer. It was unbelievable, with such a golden sun, high in a sky so blue and with such a garden wooing it and awaiting me downstairs, that I could really want to stay in bed.

I dressed and went down to the lawn, where a long chair with a canopy had been placed for me.

I took a writing-pad and a book and a work-bag with me, and they stayed companionably on the grass beside me, while I lay back on my cushions, waiting to see what I should, presently, feel inclined to do.

I thought that June and sunshine and sun-caught grass and climbing roses on the walls of home and bird-calls and humming insects would come very near to me, and gather me into a sweet and kindly rest, on a living heart of summer, and give me ease and lull away the weary pressure upon my heart.

But they left me alone. They were all quite

near me. I could lift my eyes and see them. But they did not see me. They went about their glorious tasks and left me outside all their sweetness.

And instead, I felt as if another companionship was pressing itself upon me, a sinister, insistent neighbour, determined to break in upon my loneliness and make me listen. It was like some one trying to lure me out of open fields, where a festival was being held, to draw me into a dark room and tell me a dreadful secret.

I thought of getting up and going to the rose-bed opposite me, and gathering some of the shell-pink roses to tempt the summer to come to me. But the rose-bed was the width of the lawn away, and how far away that seemed. I could hardly remember a time when the width of the lawn was not a long way for my tired feet to go. I tried to feel myself the person who had once come and gone across the lawns and down the paths of this garden and along the road beyond the garden and far into the streets of the town, taking it all as the commonplace of the day, singing no rapt *Te Deum* for the splendour of it. But I and that person had parted company, and she would not tell me how she felt.

At half-past one, when my heart had begun the different thanksgiving it has lately learned at the thought of the shelter and silence of my afternoon rest, the blast of a motor-horn sounded from the road, a motor-car turned in at the gates. I knew it, of course. How often I have been so glad to see it. It brought the dearest friends in the world, and they had come across two counties to see me.

They were out of the car before I was off my chair.

They were across the lawn before I had time to make a step forward.

But not before I knew, with a pitiful, lonely, anguished pang, that I was not glad to see them and that I wished they had not come.

They folded me in kind arms and took my hands in strong clasps. They told me how sorry they were that I had been ill and how glad they were I was so much better. They said the sunshine and the fresh air were the very thing to set me up, and they hoped I was always in the garden all day long. They told me they had books and magazines and strawberries and peaches in the car for me, and they drew me over the lawn, with arms linked into

mine, that they might bestow all these chosen treasures upon me.

They were far more dear than they had ever been before. They were dear in a way that somehow wounded me. There came an ache into my heart and tears into my eyes, and I felt myself pierced with a new, strange sorrow, just because they were so utterly, terribly precious and because I was so amazed and grateful that they should be my friends.

So I could not tell them I was not glad to see them. I could not even tell myself that friends so beloved, coming so far and so kindly to see me, were bringing me, like bitter gifts, only pain, frustration, sorrow. My heart yearned with a troubling, helpless yearning for the white bed upstairs, for the enclosing walls, the silence, the separation, the solitude. But I could not say so, even to myself.

So there was nothing to do but to talk a great deal and make a great many protestations and be overwhelmingly reassuring about my recovery, and trust to the little fevers and excitements that have waited upon me so readily lately to make a perilous bridge over the threatening afternoon.

Every one else in the house was really glad to see the beloved friends, and every one said what a pleasure it must be to me. I, too, said so, over and over again. After lunch we sat out on the lawn and talked of all that had been done by the two families and in the two counties since we met last, and all that was still to be planned for the coming autumn and winter. And I heard myself saying stupid or tactless or untrue or meaningless things, and I heard my tongue tripping over my words, and I did not seem able to help doing either.

Yet I pressed them to stay. I could not bear to have them go. I was far away from them. I had nothing to do with the things of which they talked. I had to go away—into a dark room—to be told a dreadful secret. But the fevers and excitement and tumult of heart and brain made it easiest to go on talking, to talk down the shadowy secret, to talk away the hours that must come.

After we had had tea on the lawn their car came again. They said the kindest good-byes and pressed many invitations upon me, and I stood in the doorway and watched the car turn out of the gates and disappear from the white road.

Then I went up to my room.

But there was no silence there now, no separation, no solitude.

The troubled, difficult, teasing day came with me. The voices and the eyes and the hands, the efforts and endurances and exhaustions that had been the fabric of the day, were still round me, entangling me, pressing me, tiring me. Foolish things said hurt my brain. Wise things left unsaid wounded my heart. Phantom things became real. Real things changed to phantoms. Rest was an impossibility, peace was unimaginable.

A tray was placed by my bedside. I tried to eat, but when I tried I broke down, instead, into terrible weeping.

The weeping told me half the dreadful secret. I wept because the dearest friends in all the world had come to see me and their kindness had brought me only pain. From henceforward, when the joys of life approached me, I must raise my hands and fend them off, because my weakness makes of them an anguish. Then it was I knew myself an alien thing, sent out alone from the old, happy circles, turning blindly, wretchedly, to silences, separations, solitudes, removed from beloved,

familiar, sweet and normal days, snapping my ties one by one, entering upon a life unknown, ominous, dark—afraid of it—hating it—wondering how long it will last—wondering how life can renew again.

My weeping brought me sleep, but at midnight I woke, and the midnight told me the rest of the dreadful secret.

It will last until the end!

The life upon which I enter now is the only life, after this, for me. I shall know no other again.

Upon my heart was a weight of suffering that was not pain, but worse than pain. There was no light at all in the room, and the darkness was so heavy and thick it pressed on me like an unloving presence. I was alone with the dim, threatening thing that had come nearer day by day, that had awaited me in every hour and changed everything I knew and loved, and made me, so often, so much afraid. I knew and named the illness that had laid its clutch upon me.

Oh, anguish of separation, oh, agony of desire! Dreadful and terrible, how dark it looked. There was no way out. A helpless victim, I must await its onslaughts, endure its

thefts. I must travel deeper into silence, further into the unknown. I should have no strength to play a part. I should have no gifts to bring the days. I should have no power to win response. One by one would go from me all I had gained of work and friends and duties. The tender mists that gather upon long-familiar things and ways would all be gone. I was in a region of different laws, of new initiations.

Was it a region of laws at all, or only of loss, of chaos, of the destruction of all things? Everything looked like an illusion, except the awful thing I faced. That rose up and struck its blow upon my heart. All else was deception, a mirage of habit, a mistake of familiarity.

I looked round—round the room—round my heart. There was no support. Creeping black fear crawled upon my heart.

Then exhaustion came and stunned me to sleep.

The day dawned in slow heat. When I opened my eyes the hot rays were shining on the pretty silver and pretty glass upon my dressing-table. Outside was what might once have been a splendid summer day.

Perhaps I ought to say my prayers. It

would seem the right thing for a person like me. But I cannot say my prayers. I can no more say my prayers than I can do any other thing that belongs to the life being taken away from me.

Perhaps, after all, it is not true. I should like to get up and find out if it is true. But I cannot get up.

The little teapot beside my bed is more consoling than any prayer or any hope. When people come in, they say, "You must just lie quietly all day," as if they were offering me the supreme gift of life. It makes me want to be rude, but it is all they can give me. I should be glad they give it kindly.

The sweetness of morning, then the glory of noon, fill the world outside as if with a miraculous Presence.

From my window I can see the green, undulating sward, upon which never a cloud shadow lies to-day. There is wild thyme in its hollows and the heavy, scented heads of white clover. Beyond it is a cornfield with a fringe of scarlet poppies, beside the corn, a wood. I think I never knew how golden corn can be, how scarlet are poppies, how many shades of green a

wood can hold. I never knew how they could wear the sun like a garment.

On one of the green banks, where there must be wild thyme growing, a girl and a man are sitting together, the girl in a pretty white dress and a wide hat and a scarlet sunshade, the man in a pale summer suit.

It is morning and noon with them, life at its height, life at its glory. Theirs is the response of heart to heart, of voice to voice. Theirs is the sunshine, the magic of day, the wild thyme, the poppies and the clover. Day and sunshine and life are round them—keeping them so safe.

Never again. Never again.

Youth, morning, sweet airs, happy uncounted hours, the tender, unmeasured dower of the day—mine once—but never again.

Wild thyme and white clover—the flare of poppies in the corn, the belt of trees—the maze—the splendour, the intoxication of the sun—incense of summer scents—music of summer sounds—hands out to hands—eyes meeting eyes——

To give it up! To give it up!

To lie here and see and know—and feel no

magic wake within to answer—alien—rejected—beyond reach—with empty, unresponsive hands and heart bereft of all but pain—can it be borne?

Oh, hosts of those who suffered before me—tell me this—can it be borne?

June 30.—My chair was placed near the rose-bed to-day. My hands could touch the roses, and kind hands had gathered the loveliest and laid them on the rug that covered me. The other, growing roses were very near. But they were not real. Weakness will not respond to sight, nor scent, nor touch. The roses that grow in the garden are no longer in my world. They thrill to a lost rhythm. The music within me that once could answer them is still. My heartstrings now are all tuned to a single note, they can sound only under one touch. It is the touch of the secret I learnt in the dark. It is denial. It is renouncement. Scentless roses—distant beauty—the bond that once made them mine is riven. The yielded beauty, the foregone sweetness, pierced with vision, poignant with pain, that I know in the yearnings of deprivation, are more real, are a more intimate possession.

July 2.—How can one live these days of futile suffering, fallen spirit, broken soul? To live in the midst of a lost kingdom that yet is not withdrawn, but rises around one like a phantom city, offering no entrance, nor any shelter, how can one meet the days? If I might go back but for one hour and know the days again as once I knew them, and give to that miracle of experience the worship that is its meed, then I think I could come back and be where now I am and endure and not repine. And yet, it could not be. Never is life lived as vision sees it, across the gulf of final renunciation. Sacrifice has burned away all the rebellion, all the doubt. The joy of it runs through the earth like the breath of God.

July 3.—Kindness laps my life like the lapping of warm seas about a derelict ship. The kindness would like to bear me back to my lost kingdom. But I am derelict, and every power is lost. I feel the warm seas lapping about my desolation but I cannot sail upon them and reach the kingdom that was once mine.

July 20.—Across two counties once again came the dearest friends in the world. But

this time warning of their intention had come before them and my chair was not on the lawn. An atmosphere of protection and of shelter had grown up, intangible, invisible, but strong, between me and them. I heard the car come up the drive from the gates. It seemed like a car arriving a long, long way from where I was. They were unconvincing sounds. Then I heard the beloved, familiar voices. They were strong and happy voices when they reached me from the garden, but when I heard them in the house, with footsteps going past my door, they were hushed and careful, and carried that faint furtiveness that is fear of wounding me, but wounds me all the more by the desolation that is my heart's reply to it.

They came to me later, but no impetuosity bore them towards me now. Rather they made of their entrance a portentous thing, weighted with gentleness, burdened with concern. The voices that spoke to me were measured, calculated, and yet uncertain, as if they had no sure gauge to guide them nor knew against what their measure was pressed. They spoke kindly and encouragingly, as if to a child, yet they looked wistfully, searchingly, as if at an initiate. Then, sitting at my bed-

side, they told me of wonderful cures, and of the amazement of great doctors at wonderful, unlooked-for recoveries. Their dear wish tried to lift my heart towards hope. That the hope is not a true hope nor can ever have fulfilment does not trammel their purpose, which is that there shall be hope in my heart, and so the burden of my hopelessness be somewhat eased from theirs.

They do not give me hope, and yet they fill my mind with excited thoughts that carry me over the hours and give me little mental props at which to clutch and so keep at bay the encroaching, terrible, crowding thoughts that wait for me at every awakening, and press so heavily all day upon my heart.

August 20.—Life flamed in me to-day, a fever that would not be stilled. It was an intoxication to be poised on the brink of danger. It was a thrilling adventure to snatch an hour's excitement from that perilous denial that has engulfed so much. So when afternoon came, bringing great heat and kindly pleas on loving voices, I got up and dressed in one of the pretty pale dresses I chose with such reckless hope in early summer, and I went

down, into the sunshine, to the chair upon the lawn.

There were others on the lawn to-day. At a little distance, so that I should not be tried and tired, white-clad forms were flitting, and I could see the gorgeous stripes of University blazers bright against the sun-softened green. I could hear voices, murmurous and absorbed, and the tap-tap of croquet balls. Across the flower-beds I could see the grey curves of the croquet hoops, clear and fine against the vivid lawn. I could see the white-clad, moving figures, the white-shod, moving feet. There was a tea-table in the shade of trees, and about it, a group of beloved people.

How can I have said that life was far away? It is so near that it is a wound. It pierces through defences that are no longer potent against it, and reaches a remoteness in me that receives it in pain and cries out against it, and yet cannot pluck it out and cast it away.

It is August, and all the thoughts that belong to August are stabbing me. And August is hurrying past me, leaving me none of its treasures. Pictures of the heather rise up before me—the pungent, mysterious banks of purple heather—the little brilliant bells of the ling

that I see always wearing the raindrops. Pictures of the brown streams, breaking into golden foam against wet boulders, come to me, and the music of the running water sings and moans in my ears, so that I feel if I could hear it once again I should understand it for ever and be consoled. Pictures of golf-links come, of putting-greens where a little, white, magic ball, breathlessly watched, finds an enchanted way straight to an exquisite disappearance—then again bringing a perfect response to desire in a triumphant ascent into the blue air, conquering distance, calling such thoughts of freedom, such uplifted impulses, to follow its wonderful way. And with the pictures, what poignant memories of the gay comradeship of holiday places and the shared, happy adventure of skill. All the sharp angles, all the cold definitions, are hidden by the happy mist that is pleasure. The holiday steps are such glad, free steps.

The pictures and the memories and the regrets stabbed me, and all the time the voices called in the garden around me and the tap-tap of the croquet balls went on, with little interrupting disharmonies of china against china from the tea-table. Then the pictures fell

away, into forgetfulness, and only these things were real, and they confused and tired me. But I did not want to escape into solitude. I felt as if I were running a race against a solitude that was trying to overtake me, running a race with delay for the only prize.

But when the hush of deepening afternoon, that can be so wonderful, but to-day seemed so cold and hard, came creeping in long shadows over the lawn, I lost the race. Wherever I was, there was only solitude. I left the lawn and came up through the quiet house to my room, alone.

It was very quiet there, far away from life. There was no inviting comfort awaiting me. Even the bed and the pillows and the deep easy-chairs chilled me with refusal.

Then suddenly I knew again.

One may not know once for all. That knowledge comes again and again, and every time it is new.

Darkness—a malign touch—caught my heart and my mind, caught me terribly, all of me. I was alone with malignity—with destruction. I was alone with approaching destruction that approached to destroy me. Slowly, hour by hour, to destroy me and all the

dear things I know and love. To destroy the fabric of my life—tearing it away. To destroy it utterly—and me.

Every resistance, every endurance, every watchfulness, broke me. Over me swept the dark tide of hopelessness, of misery. Under it I tossed, a nameless, broken thing, under the weight of it, the destroying weight of it—cast out and alone—broken and alone—far, far down—alone and unreachable.

Not unreachable! No words could reach me, but a presence did. A little, warm and fluffy life had leaped determinedly and with impassioned eagerness upon me. A little, warm and fluffy life, quivering with concern and determination, had flung every power with which God had endowed it upon me—to serve, to bless and to console. A little dog. Compassion reaching me through that little eager life, reaching me unspoiled by word, by curiosity, by busy brain with a tale to gather and tell. Weak, protecting hands that hid weeping eyes were pushed away by a strong, determined, little black muzzle—a little, warm, roseleaf tongue caressed and caressed, determined, filled with a single aim, little tender whines crooned, breaking the dark silence, a

fluffy, vigorous, squirrel-tail wagged, wagged in unconquerable hope.

Healing came. How could one repulse that message? Hope came. How could one disbelieve such love? The Angel of Compassion chose his instrument well. The little sweet Obedience, that had been created a little Pekingese dog, had borne his word faithfully to me. My desolation broke under that unmeasured, impassioned sympathy that I had not asked, nor looked for.

August 21.—I wondered to-day what consolation is. Were health suddenly mine again that would not be consolation, but reparation. Yet consolation is real and has its own strange sweetness—so sweet and so strange that one would not like to have passed through life and never known it. For it depends upon no condition nor circumstance. It lives only by its own mystery. There is something indestructible and immutable about it, as if it welled up from eternity, so that, blessed by it, one comes to feel that at the heart of eternity is an abiding reassurance.

Summer is over now. There is always one

day when summer gathers up her gifts and vanishes. One wakes up in the morning to find autumn in possession. It has come early this year, and the autumn transformation is apparent in everything. The trees, meeting the wind, rustle with a sharper note. The texture of the air has changed. All the colours glow differently. The light falls differently. The skies look different. There are different scents in the air. Yesterday it was summer. To-day it is autumn. It is a curious sharpening—like a warning, and yet it is an enchantment.

And all this I knew again to-day, in a sudden moment of freedom and response. Then the door closed once more upon all the exquisite, inexplicable, piercing impressions the pageant of this earth can so wonderfully make upon us.

I am glad it is autumn. The message of autumn seems nearer to me. I want to be away from here, once again with the streets and traffic of town around me—where the world will have a sterner aspect—and there will be no invitations to pleasure that now are to me not lures, but denials. We misunderstood each other, this summer and I. I

thought some of its gifts were for me, but they were not. But I know what autumn promises, and I know that autumn will keep its promise.

September 29.—Summer, with all its broken hopes, is left behind. I am back again in the house in a town. I think the journey that brought me back had less unrest of thought than the journey that carried me away.

My room is high above a highroad that is an entrance into the city and all day long and far into the night the traffic passes. The cornfield, the poppies, the trees, seem far away. They live in my mind like a picture that has become a sorrowful language. But from this window in the town I can look further than I could from that country window. The road curves away after passing this house, and there are belts of gardens in my vision, and where the road curves again, houses stand high above a valley. When I lie awake I can see the grey dawn quiver behind the housetops and change to the rose of sunrise. I can see the house-lights gleam out like beacons when darkness approaches. I can see the golden glow start into the great windows of a church when it is time for evening service. At night the lamps

of the motors throw their light right across my pillows, and for a long minute all my room is bright.

What eagerness went with old returns! What anticipations! What reunions! There is nothing to plan now. I think it is better to be here than in the country. There are workers in the city. Pain and work have something in common, but pain and holiday must be for ever at variance.

I face the final changelessness now. Nothing can happen to vary it. Yet every morning it is new. Every morning when the door opens and my tray is carried in and I am left alone again, the tears flood up to throat and eyes, and I cannot hold them back, nor face with any courage the denying day that stretches before me so interminably.

There are fewer people in this house. I hear fewer footsteps passing through it. Few voices break the silence. Once there were more people. There are rooms left empty now. It may be that it is well. People reproach me that I do not want them. I do not want them. I do not want myself. I want nothing but the blessed, black curtain of the night upon the tragedy that is my life. In the

night I am alone with my dark knowledge. It may be terrible and terrifying, laying a weight upon my heart that can never be lifted again, save in sleep. But at least I am hidden away and unreproached. No one peers into the heart that holds its dark secret, save myself.

As far as may be I try to gather courage. I remember lines of haunting poetry and I wonder whence they took their rise. I remember stern, prophetic Bible phrases and I wonder how they came to be framed. I cling to the touches of sympathy that reach me, to the little gifts that break the hours, the kindly messages that break my thoughts. They are sometimes so unexpected, and come to me from sources that would have seemed to me the last to which I might look for remembrance and for understanding. Yet I can build but a frail defence with all they give me.

It is the everyday things—the blessed, normal, commonplace things that torture me most with their desirability. I have only to picture myself sitting at my mirror, tying a veil about a hat, pulling open a drawer and taking out gloves—making ready to go somewhere—planning to go somewhere, towards some sweet

unknown, starting out—and with that piercing memory of lost, uncounted joys the dark waters rush over me. I am in a frenzy of homesickness, desolation, loneliness, lost and unsupported in a chaos of nothingness, with that strange awfulness of seeming to inhabit no place in time or in eternity.

And there is no relief. With bruised heart and ceaseless aching desire I must meet that returning agony. I must fight the fight over again. I must reconquer that great weakness that fastens me with its strange piercings to my helplessness.

By day I must endure.

By night I must wake and remember. By day and night my thoughts must meet and face it. There is nothing else to face. Yet I feel like one who waits. Trembling, troubled, wistful, I feel like one who waits. For what can I wait?

October 2.—I woke in the night. It was not long after midnight, long for patience if sleep was not to return. The pressure was heavy on my heart. I raised myself on my piled pillows to face the blow and the crushing of my prison-place.

But there was no blow and there was no prison.

Light flickered in the room from the lamps in the street. The flash of motors came and went as they approached and passed and disappeared. There were sounds of footsteps and voices from the pavement. But they were far away, calling to no response from me. They had fallen far away from me with those enclosing prison bands that had held me, and that now had broken about me and set me free.

All the prison, all the penning pressure had gone. The place in which I was set was no longer narrow, but wide—oh, wide—wider than any place I have ever known. Doors had been flung open. I never knew there were such doors to open or to close. And every door was open upon such exquisite, tremulous joy that just to be still and to receive it was more than life had ever taught me to desire. Straight before me, it seemed, one wonderful door had been flung wide and a wonderful path stretched, purple with sweet shadows, dim and beautiful and fragrant, with sheltering walls on either side of it, and at the end—Light—Life—a Presence—oh, Life and Presence such as never reached my consciousness before—that

called to me, that knew my name—that knew my name and called to me as I have never been known nor called before.

"The way to me is still the same."

Did I hear the words? They rang in my ears as if I had heard them. They lived in my memory as if they had been spoken in my room. My heart mounted as if on wings. There was no loss at all in all the universe. Life met me—life that was beauty, tenderness, endowment, and I saw a path that no denial could ever take from me. Suddenly there was flung upon me so deep and near a kinship with all the world that the kingdom of life I thought I had lost ran back into my heart with nearness indescribable. There was no longer any difference, nor any separation, nor any solitude. I knew, nor felt, nor endured nothing that all the world did not share with me. I saw the whole world knowing imprisonment, limitation, mutability, facing conditions that frustrate and deny. And I knew that no life is free till unknown, unguessed-at freedom breaks upon it, answering its inmost desire. And that Way never changes—never closes—in all the world.

Then Joy passed through my room and filled it. Joy after joy passed through my

room and bore me upward, onward. The bonds that had crushed me had gone—or had they changed? I knew unbreakable bonds with every heart in the whole world, and with the Heart of Creation—with that perfect Presence—that perfect Life.

I did not want to sleep. I wanted to lie awake and remember. But blessed sleep that was like sheltering wings descended upon me and I did not wake till morning.

When my door opened and my tray was put at my bedside, and I was left alone again, I did not weep. Had I wept it would have been with thanksgiving for the rapturous joy that waited for me in my room. To lie here for a lifetime would not be too long if I might wait upon such joy again.

It dwells in everything. Everything is near, but as if I made my approach to it by a different door, and new tendrils reached out to entwine me and hold me in a precious closeness. Up the curving road the workers are making their way towards the city. I feel as if I knew why they are going and why they work, but I cannot tell myself all my knowledge. I feel as if I had my part in a wonder-

ful destiny that holds me with them in the circle of its promise. And they are all so dear—the workers, the children, the traffic, the houses on the cliff, the church with the great windows. And I am rich because I may lie here and see them and think of them.

October 5.—I do not need to seek for courage for these days. There is no courage needed. The hours come towards me bringing me thoughts, and with their help I seek new knowledge, and I have joy for a companion. I do not need to wonder where the haunting poems take their rise, nor where the stern, prophetic texts were framed. I know. I have seen the region where they have their source.

And yet—what happened in that night?

Was it a dream, born of sickness and weakness and solitude? I have dreamed often. This was not a dream.

I think I must have heard all the morning stars sing together and all the sons of God shout for joy.

October 11.—I lost a kingdom that I loved and the loss seemed terrible and irreparable. Now another kingdom has grown up around

me, or perhaps a hidden kingdom has become visible, like fairy-tale palaces and castles. All the lure of fairy tales lay in the emergence of wonders that were usually invisible, and in speech from things that were usually silent. Of course there have always been hidden kingdoms. There is one in every heart. We see and we touch and we move amongst all the intricate and fascinating things that make up the glory of life, but it is from the hidden heart-kingdom rises the delight, the rapture, the sorrow, the frustration that are no less part of life. From that kingdom, too, come the desires that nothing in life can satisfy. And now, when the outer life has fallen from me like a husk, I am discovering reaches in that hidden kingdom of which I could not even dream. It is as if yet another kingdom, invisible and great, invited us as deeply as ever the outer world could invite us, and is able to awaken raptures and delights, sorrows and frustrations as absorbing and varied as those I lose daily. All my treasures of joy and memory I take out of the darkness that has gathered about them, and I repossess them in the new kingdom. There are some things—a few things—oh, the most precious, the most be-

loved secret things—memories that are sweeter than other memories, eyes that told me more than other eyes, voices that carried treasures to me that were more than any word or tone—these come to me again, sweeter, nearer, more unassailably mine, from the very heart of the invisible kingdom. I have not lost them with the life I regretted most because it seemed to me they must go with it. They never belonged to it. They came to me, always, from the invisible kingdom, and that is why they were so dear. It may be that love takes its rise, like haunting poetry and prophetic Bible words, from eternity, and that eternity is the soul of life, and of all life's most precious things.

October 19.—Some one came to my room to-day whom I have not seen before. I did not want to see him. More than once I have found a convincing excuse to refuse to see him. I have found equally convincing excuses against many entrances lately, for I have grown very weary of futile advice and insincere optimism. There is such solitude in trying to smile and to listen and to answer people who try to relieve, not my oppression, but their

own, with little invented phrases. The advice and the optimism turn rapidly to chiding if that relief fails them. So I had only dread for some one untried and unknown, who wore the collar and cloth that might give the advice and the optimism and the chiding a wider range in which to wound and weary. But dread has lately gone out of fashion in my little high room, and adventure has taken its place, so a visitor came in who had never come in before.

He did not ask me any questions. He gave me no advice, nor had he many inventions in optimism to which I must listen. He seemed able to face, with perfect equanimity, a person who will never again be well, and to retain an atmosphere of most amazing joy he bore about him, and which unmistakably entered my room with him. He had not come to relieve oppression, but to share joy. He had not come to advise but to serve. "I have been waiting for weeks to know what I could do for you," he said. "If you had been in a hospital I would have known how to find my way to you. Being where you are, I could only stand on your doorstep until you let me in." He came further into my solitude than I ever thought

any one could when he said that. It touched me, who have been so desolate, that some one, unknown to me, waited to serve me. It made me feel that out in the world, as in my lonely room, are undivined, ungathered joys, and we raise barriers to them, as we raise barriers to the joys of God. "Would you have stood very much longer?" I asked him. "At intervals, I should have stood till the stones wore through, or the police removed me, or old age crippled me," he answered. "Then you don't disapprove of people who can never be well?" I asked him. "They are part of my work when they allow me to help," he said. "I am glad to be just an ordinary person again," I said.

"There is no such thing as an ordinary person," was his answer. "Just as in all the forests there are no two leaves alike. But as far as everything essential is concerned, there is little difference between the person who is well and the person who may never again be well. The really desirable things remain in exactly the same place."

It was strange he should have said that.

"There are privileges in being drawn out of the crowded ways. It is delightful to find how

convincing the desirable things become. Nor do you have to spend so much time dealing with a worldful of people apt to get incensed against you, and to provide you with uninspiring occupations. 'My mother's sons were incensed against me. They made me keeper of the vineyards. But mine own vineyard have I not kept.' No one can try here, to draw you back into the world's vineyards."

I had not expected the wonderful, impassioned, beautiful Song of Songs to come singing its way into my room like this. Until now such very different texts have been thought suitable.

He knelt at my bedside and said prayers before he went away. He did not say them because he thought them suitable, but because, to him, they were part of the joy he had come to share. After he had gone, I lay and thought that he, too, had certainly discovered an invisible kingdom with magnificent reaches of rapture and joyousness, sorrow and tenderness, and that a great deal of his time was spent in it. Perhaps, too, he knows some measure of pressure and limitation. There is a certain prisoning in the collar and the cloth he wears.

The kingdom is infinitely worth while discovering.

It is extraordinary rapturous to dwell in it.

If the way to the kingdom could break upon me only by the piercing of pain, solitude, sorrow—the cost is not too great. Pain has some part in that mysterious region. But first pain is a dark angel that stands sentinel with a flaming sword, lest we enter and grow content in an Eden we have spoiled.

November 10.—The days of mystic peace and joy have fled from my room. Quiet and solitude have fled it too. Instead, pain has passed through it, difficult, troubling, changing pain, a procession of distress. Life has had to fight hard to keep its hold on me. At my bedside there comes and goes an old Scottish nurse, with white hair and blue, Highland eyes. She brings with her something of the mystery of her far Highlands, some trace of the spell of the heather, the glens, the mountain tarns. Her eyes have a deeper vision than most eyes have. They tell me deep, true things. Even when she tries to tell me I am going to get quite well, and I know I can never get quite well, still her eyes tell me deep, true things.

There are nurses (I have seen them) whose eyes hold nothing true to tell. I am glad none of them are near me now. Where I am only true things can bring ease. The looks and words and ways that are unwinged with truth miss their aim here. Suffering and weakness are very sure of their own needs. Perhaps from sick people one might discover what are the real desires of the human spirit. There would be the language of eternity in every one of them. I love the return of dawn. The promise of immutability comes with it. I love the sound of a bell in the city. Its call invokes for me the lost magic of distance. I love the silence that creeps over the world with the coming of night. My room falls into a strange silence. My old nurse watches—watches beside me, while all the house about us sleeps. The mystery of watching is one of the mysteries of the world. All activity has died down. Human wills have drooped and bent to submission. Some strange, great Spirit has entered and possessed them. Then watching becomes like the brooding of a patient Eternity, of an Eternal and patient Purpose. It is in the watching hours we know how much

there is to know and how little we do know. In them we are content not to know, but to wait.

November 12.—I have looked into a region of horror. With inner eyes I have seen, and with every fibre of my being I have felt, a world where there is nothing but an unutterably dreadful, mechanical pulsing, that beats on for ever without mind, without purpose, without response to our hearts and minds, with no relationship whatever to those things we perpetually crave. Hope, beauty, wisdom, renewal, expression, love, effort, aspiration, the intertwining of our spirit with them all—these are life itself. But I had entered upon an agonized existence where not one of them was, where they were made to seem but some foolish, unreal, mocking mist, that sometimes fell in illusory consolation, and hid that relentless throb of mindless law, whose naked ruling was the only permanence. I longed to struggle against it, but I could only suffer in terror. No appeal could enter it. It was law, but it had no knowledge. It ruled, but without intent. It was cruelty, but without malice. I

knew myself and every living thing to be entangled in it. It convinced me utterly, and under it, helpless, how I suffered.

"She is out of herself a little; the chloroform has done it," I heard my old nurse say.

I may have been out of myself, but hidden heart and hidden eyes declared that region real. I had looked upon despair.

Some one stood beside my bed and spoke. It was the Dweller in Joy, who lately came with joy into my joy-filled room.

I think I caught his hand. I told him I was afraid.

He knelt beside my bed and I think he prayed. I felt the strong touch of his hands on mine, and something ran into that region of anguish that changed the dreadful beating, and I remembered and believed.

For an hour I had rest. Then again the dreadful places caught me. I suffered and I was afraid, and the Dweller in Joy had gone.

November 18.—Deeply I slept and far away from all dreams. I woke in tender peace. Great is the relief to my tired frame, but it is not real peace. The true peace is a living sword that refts life's unrest in two and frees

the soul, setting it amongst those things which are not held in the clasp of any law we know, and which pass all understanding. But this sweet lulling, this tender lapping of soft thought and charmed memory, this wrapping twilight about experience's harshness—this is drug. The rest it yields, and the Rest of God are not the same. Deeply—unmistakably—splendidly—they are not the same.

December 8.—For a month I have dwelt in a region of shadows and silence—dwelt, a rejected guest, between heaven and earth. I do not lift my head much, nor do the days seem very real. It is an inward world that is mine now, where I lie alone and ponder this ineffable, piteous mystery of suffering.

What did I see—that strange and terrible night that filled my vision with undreamt-of darkness? What strange and awful law separated me from every desire? Was it the “earth cursed for our sake”? Did I fall deeper into the forbidden laws, that clutch and hold us against all that within us loves and remembers and desires a different destiny? Has human nature really fallen where God never meant it to be? Did I see a vision of

life as it would be, did it remain for ever unpierced by Spirit? To Spirit, then, belong all the divine, sweet, lovely things that fill the days with joy and nameless sweetness and wonderful fears. To Spirit belongs all that we call life. Speech, hope, beauty, art that fashions, taste that chooses, the marvel we name expression—do they all travel to us by those magic doors that opened once to my yearning eyes and caught me into ecstasy? Did I look, that night of torment, upon life as it would be, were those doors closed for ever?

Now, in my weakness, there comes towards me a winged thought, that draws me away from every fear. It is the thought of that trinity of life as we know it—of being and expressing and feeling. We are Life, Action and the Mood that unites them—the Mood or Spirit that quickens and unites and enlarges them so mysteriously. That is our life—it is ourselves—a trinity—as God is the Holy Trinity. And all down the ages marvellously it has been proclaimed and sung that we are “made in His image.”

How flamingly real looks that threefold life—seen in contrast to that denying region where everything went to the heavy throb of cause

and effect. Truth is not a heavy throb. Truth is a flaming Trinity.

Now for a moment—for one blessed moment—it has seemed to me that I have “seen face to face.”

December 20.—“The time draws near the birth of Christ.” I seem to feel Christmas, like an approaching Presence, filling the streets and houses, colouring the late dawns and early sunsets. My thoughts do not need to seek Christmas. It comes to me. I know without trying that the churches are full of holly, that the streets are busy, that children are eager, that people’s thoughts are with their friends. Christmas gathers upon the world like a living thing. It is more than a custom. Truth waits to quicken the custom of Christmas and make it a mystic, living thing.

December 25.—My Christmas has brought me gifts that break, each one, my prison bars. On my table are deep red and rose carnations glowing out of their own sharp grey-green foliage. Across the little dark hollows of the room they shine like thoughts made visible—symbol of the long friendship whose faith and

tenderness have sent them here. Pale pink carnations are in another glass, with the feather of asparagus fern, a memory of a friend whose favourite flower they were, whose grave not long ago shone with them out of the snow, brought by the sister who in her sorrow has found time to cherish me. Violets I have too. My old nurse said my Christmas would not be complete without them. An embroidered box carries a written message for me—"Where e'er you go, may flowers blow"—a true, dear message for my lonely room, where flowers are the sweetest entrance many of my days can know. A friend, whose touch is always near and wonderful, has sent me that mysterious, sorrowful head of Our Lord by Leonardo da Vinci. The downcast eyelids have a wistfulness—a wistfulness that pierces, yet consoles. Rupert Brooke's poems are beside me. "He was always in love with something greater than life or death," I find written of him. Are we all born to be in love with something greater than life or death? The poets give themselves to that love. Rupert Brooke gave himself twice over. Surely it was worth while. For even I, for a magic hour

in a wondrous night, have been in love with something greater than life or death.

December 28.—My old Highland nurse knows her Bible all through, and it sets a seal upon her heart, a seal upon her arm. Her thoughts and acts leave her carrying the stamp of her long knowledge. I think all thoughts and acts bear the stamp they have received in those deep, hidden reaches out of which personality springs—so much deeper in some people than in others, and so differently fed. Last night she pondered long upon the whereabouts of Sheba, deciding at last that it was Persia. "Would she be young or old, the Queen of Sheba, I wonder?" she asked me. "Young, of course young, or how could she have taken such a long journey on camels?" I answered. "I was thinking if she was young and pretty, King Solomon would never have let her away. But, of course, if she'd been old she could never have gone with all thae camels," she said wisely.

I wanted her to find a text for me. It had come into my mind suddenly. I read it in childhood, coming into a child's story, "*And*

the inhabitant shall not say I am sick." A calm and wonderful pity, that makes me feel so strangely still and so wonderfully held, draws me into itself with the marvel of those words.

Yet it was I who found them first, coming upon them as I searched the many pages and many chapters of the Book of Isaiah. And the lifelong Bible-student who nurses me says she went to bed reluctantly, owning her failure. "Though I searched a fair hour," she says, and then adds, "But if you've found them then it's all right."

December 30.—The flowers that come into my room now are not like the flowers that grow in the gardens I remember. Scentless, distant, lovely, lonely—I see them as if across a chasm—as one's thoughts of heaven used to be. They are like stars from a different sphere—mystic—inexplicable—speaking a language from ineffable regions.

The rose carnations on my mantelpiece to-night bend and drop over the mantelshelf, so that the firelight catches them in its glow. There is only the firelight in the room. It moves like a living thing, and all the bright

points in the room answer it. There is a hush all around me. It creeps in every evening as if brooding wings descended and stilled the busy rhythm that is life—so that everything beats more softly to a changed and gentler tension that is very, very quiet, and yet always alert—always expectant.

But now, when I watch and wait in the enfolding wings of that brooding sweetness, I know for what it is I watch and wait.

January 5.—New Year has brought me fallen thoughts. In these days I have felt like Jephthah's daughter—I want to push away all claims, all demands, and be alone to mourn the unfinished sadness that my life has been.

In the street below a child is crying—crying.

The reproach is more than I can bear. Who—what—is reproached by the crying of children? And I lie here—alone—silent—in a world of crying children.

January 8.—I think there are some people who when there is success are called and drawn to share it. And there are others who are drawn magnetically and irresistibly to stand beside failure, helplessness and unrewarded pain.

Of such is the old nurse who comes and goes at my bedside now—and because of it I shall love her more than any nurse I have known or may know. For the end is failure. Robert Louis Stevenson says man is not meant to succeed. Perhaps it is God who is meant to succeed. So those who can stand beside failure and gather it up into faith, reach into Eternity when they do it. Eternity may be our true success. The little, fugitive successes and triumphs that fly past us like summer days are only little symbols or prophecies. They are too fleeting to be anything else.

January 20.—The snow has drifted past my window all day. It is white on the roofs. It is black and soiled in the streets. But weather no longer reaches me. Often I do not remember whether winter or summer reigns outside. Memory itself has changed its relationship to my days. Yesterday, last year, six years ago, are equally biddable, equally remote, in my long hours.

Once the darling rain beat on the windows and soft thoughts sprang into my heart to answer it. Once the summer mornings, blue with the haze of coming heat, woke passionate de-

sires, and the poignant thrill of pleasure. Once the mild spring winds, carrying the scents of the earth when it is broken by the upward push of growing things, full of the nameless lure of the earth's renewing life, met me with bewildering magic and called my pulses to a splendid beat. The snow in sunlight had its own ridiculous merriment, the snow at night its cold, mystic enchantment.

But now the eyes carry no message to the slumbering senses. They gaze out of my high window and they see the rain and the sun, the snow, the blue sky and the wandering city smoke, but they bring none of these things to me. All would win a nearer place in my heart if I read them in a printed book. The frame of quivering nerves and hidden senses that I call myself, now is tuned to a different tension. It is strung to a changed key. The messages it can receive and answer strike upon finer, stranger wires. If I were brought to the edge of the sea and saw its waves breaking on the sand—close to my eyes, close to my touch, the salt pungence in the air I breathed—it would be no nearer to me than a painted ocean. If the great hills rose around me, the purple heather, the splash of mountain burns, the wide

spaces of the moor—I should see—the next moment I would forget that I had seen—and turn away, knowing, feeling, holding nothing—save the unchanging tension of those taut nerves that clasp my spirit in unyielding grasp.

Only light still brings me its great pageant of changing charm and glory. The cold, crude gleam of winter noon, when sorrow and pain are hardest to bear, changes to the uncertain light of early gloaming. The rosy glow from shaded electric lamps starts up around me. Then that is gone and there is only the dancing firelight. The firelight fades, and the flickering light of street lamps, meeting the wind, crosses the deepening darkness, and the travelling light of the motors enters for a long minute, crosses my pillows and vanishes. The lights in the windows of distant houses go out one by one. Then there are only the rows of street lamps edging the roads, the starshine, sometimes the moonshine.

But the moonshine, when the roofs are dark against a white sky, and silver patches lie upon my floor, is part of the earth-pageant that has shut me out.

When the moon's nights come, and I remember in longing the miracle of the heart's

response to the moods of the lovely earth, I am glad that I have learnt a faith that teaches the Resurrection of the Body.

January 29.—My old Highland nurse no longer watches beside me, and no longer is every morning broken by doctor's visits. The days are quiet, the strange places of terror and revelation have retreated and memory cannot recall them. I am as near to normal life as I can ever be again. Perhaps it is not very near. Does any one guess the God-given sweetness of the normal till the dreadful pressure of the abnormal has been known? But into normal days I can no longer bring my heart. I have there no abiding city. I must learn to love another kingdom.

February 2.—Friends come from time to time. I would like to be glad every time, but sometimes I am not glad at all. I think then the friends have not been glad to come, but vaguely feel a pressure as of something due. And then their presence is but an added solitude. They ask me questions that burden memory and quicken grief to answer. They advise me. Advice eases the giver a thousand

times for once it brings wisdom to the sufferer. And I must listen to a little patter of congratulatory phrase, of which I have learnt to anticipate every word. It is always delightful to see me so much better. It is always so certain that I have "taken the turn." Always I am so much stronger than I was. They would not take such vain repetitions to a dinner-party. They think because to visit the sick is new to them, that it must be equally new to the sick to be visited. So I must listen and answer and try to feel grateful—grateful even for that strange pressure they hate and which yet is strong enough to bring them. And all the time I yearn for some echo of a larger life to lighten the weight of my unchanging days. At last they go. "You look ever so much better than I expected, so much better than you looked last time. Hurry up and get quite well." They all say it.

I think that I have met the same gaucherie before. I think it entered nursery days, and was not more welcome then than now. Children, too, live in a world difficult for busy, unpliant brains to penetrate, and busy, unpliant brains think no worlds so hard to enter can

be worth entering. Children and sick people share the same patronage. The regions they inhabit are dubbed delusion. And yet the busiest brain takes its own rest and renewal from those regions of delusion—when the treasures of those regions are transmuted into poetry or play, book, music, or picture.

But there are friends who are different.

No pressure brings them here, and all pressures vanish with their presence. When they leave, all the bright spots in my life are shining again. They have set me free, once more, amongst them, to gather faith and hope. They are the true interpreters. Light is struck from every contact with them. In that light I look back, and I can see through all my life, the piercing touches of a sweeter life, and I can believe they were the touches of Heaven.

I think the word friend has taken a new meaning since these friends came to this quiet room.

They do not seem to remember I am ill. Their thoughts are not enclosed in the walls that enclose me. Their thoughts are not the thoughts desire impels. They have learnt the thoughts that hope inspires. They wait upon

no wishes of their own, but listen to a larger command. It seems to me they read the thought that God has hidden in me.

Now I begin to think the greatest powers of all wait upon a great obedience. I think there are wonderful laws and Presences very near us, waiting always to make life sacramental.

February 9.—Sorrow of heart caught me to-day. Oh, for peace, for rest—deep, deep rest. I think only the end of life—the break of the eternal dawn—can bring the rest I long for. It is one of those days when every minute tells me how desolate I am, and I know, to the depth of knowing, how sad, lonely, tortured, is the thirst of my heart. All this day the opening of magic doors, the piercing of sacramental thoughts, the sweetness of unexpected emotion, all the life of the spirit, looked poor and thin beside the radiance of the life of the heart—the life I have lost for ever.

Only to watch the heavy hours go by.

And my life—a half-tasted cup—goes past me with them. And pain—the only cup of which I have drunk deeply—stays.

How blessed death looks in such weariness.

February 10.—With the falling of night, once again joy entered my room.

Tired pulses, tense, taut, suffering nerves felt its entrance. It came as the subtle sweetness of a hidden garden, sending fragrance from unseen flowers.

I looked out at it with answering heart and questioning mind. How could it be real? It could not be. The past day called to no joy.

But I met eternal laughter in the shadows of my little room. Freedom entered—on eternal wings. It was not freedom in the little broken bits that scatter life. It stood beside me a living Presence. It caught me into itself. In sudden, sweet shock of infinite surprise I knew the caress of eternity.

The rapture of every dawn was mine—the response of all young, glad, unthinking things. The ecstasy of the sun's new light, striking the mountain-tops at sunrise—striking the crests of waves—caught in the rise of spray—the break of waves in morning silence—the scents of untouched morning—these were in my heart. Eternal youth was in my heart, untrammelled by heavy thought, undarkened by trail of memory, but answering joy from clefts deeper than any youth can know.

Sweetest of all was the calm, upholding strength like the hand of love on my heart, the great assurance that here was the ultimate reality, the eternal destiny, the infinitude of truth.

Yet I could smile at the lovely thing and watch and question and tell myself of it, unstunned by any strangeness. Nothing in all my life had ever been less strange. Strangeness had gone for ever out of all things. I think I have never been myself till joy from out eternity came and told me what I was.

Perfect happiness I knew—union with a spirit that was divine—bringing me unimaginable rapture—telling me unutterable things.

February 12.—The beauty and the freedom passed from out my room. Or did the little laws that govern life and master the body claim me again, and hide from me the Truth that never passes, nor changes, nor knows any shadow of variableness? It is not to be recalled by will or wish. But peace stays in my heart and deep content. Once again I can bring all my thoughts into light greater than any thought, and in that light see them grow wonderful.

I think I can never again desire anything so much as to gaze upon knowledge in the revealing rapture of that greater knowledge. I think I can never again know denial, save the denial of that light. I think in all the universe there is no denial, save that strange denial with which each soul has wrapped itself about, wearing it like a coil of foreign darkness, alien both to itself and to eternity.

February 14.—Everything moves lightly in my room. Day's ritual touches me no more heavily than the light settling of birds pausing in their flight. Night comes on mystic steps and holds in its shadows some remembered fragrance of the Presence that filled the night, and filled my room, and filled my heart and spirit. I gather my thoughts into it. I gather my memories. I gather the sweetest words of poetry. For they rose out of that unimaginable light. In a transcendent moment they were captured by a soul set free. Thus they were brought to me.

February 25.—The Dweller in Joy came into my room to-day.

There were hyacinths beside me, blue and lovely, and starry, white narcissi.

Their fragrance passed me by. Flowers shine as the stars do, from a different sphere. It is a cold and distant shining—serene, scentless, remote.

But the Dweller in Joy shed all his gladness upon me. It, too, was like the laughter of eternity.

For an hour he sat at my bedside and talked to me. He speaks his own language, but his joy and his knowledge and all his thoughts come from the other side of the magical doors.

As he talks, my own thoughts, too vast for my tired mind, fall back into the old channels. Bible thoughts can clasp them, can keep them safe. Church teaching can draw them, make them strong. He bears with him enfolding airs, like the enfolding of the Church—protecting, guiding, quickening the sweetness and the light and life of inner spirit. Something of this I told him, and the telling broke an old thought of a hard, unyielding convention that once my mind harboured and named Church.

“But the Church is always the Bride of Christ,” he answered, “never the Bridegroom of the world.”

When he left me, the greatest of all love-songs once more sang in my heart. “A garden

enclosed is my sister, my spouse." My room was no longer a lonely cross. It was a garden awaiting the dawn. Its shadows were no longer of denial; they were the shadows of approach.

March 19.—March takes its way through heavy days. Fatigue has clung to me with bands upon my heart, upon my lips, upon my throat, with sagging weight upon my feet. In how many hours has consciousness not been lost in all but a dull awareness of discomfort.

Helplessly, reluctantly, sadly, spirit, mind and heart have drooped and failed, knowing no response save to the heavy tread of the hours, the dull going of the day, the intolerable airs of denial.

In my room people have come and gone, leaving a trail of weariness.

As there are words that can wound—even the strong know that—so there are thoughts that can crush. The sharpening of pain brings them to revelation, but their darkening must always be a potent thing, though their power remains unnamed. Little mean minds can trouble, for us, the beauty of the world. The stars and the mountains and the wide spaces

remain, but hearts have got entangled in different reaches, and cannot answer.

Now as I lie here—pierced by suffering and weakness—I am vividly aware of many affinities with dark, deep, far-falling glooms which cling to my spirit as fatigue drags at my limbs. That strange lowering that silences the finer wires and denies their message to the mind—what is it? Is it that imprisoning will a vision-hour revealed to me?

Self is always the same. It is not humanity, but a dark emanation from humanity. It is neither personality nor individuality, but a noisome fog, concealing both.

One selfish person brings one into exactly the same atmosphere as another selfish person, taking a deadly sameness. They all bear the same airs, they say the same things with a destroying repetition that holds never a surprise, never a renewal. And every self-sunk mood brings the same heaviness, the same thoughts, the same despondency. The wings of expression fail in its clogging presence. It holds down every soaring thing.

And amongst those many affinities that make our nature so intricate a fabric, a house of

many stories, there dwells the little flame of choice that can say yes to any of them and must say yes to one—can climb with those that soar, can fall with those that sink.

Surely here lies that strange mystery of interpretation, making of life so different a picture to one from another. Every high and low level of man's great reach of affinity can claim its part in every experience, every event. He can choose what his eyes shall see. He can choose his heart's response. He can build his life on his chosen level.

So no heaviness, no darkness can convince me. I suffer under it, I do not believe in it. Its unreality is its cruelty. The finer wires are silent, but they are there. The wings are folded, but they are not broken. My destiny is still a winged thing. The flame of choice that is the God-given soul in me owns no affinity with denial. Its element is endowment. I have known and I cannot forget. The true words quicken, only the false destroy. The real thoughts set free, they do not crush. If the seal of God's promise is an ache of desire in my heart, the promise is my freedom. Hearts and hands go out—out—seeking re-

sponse, finding it on many levels. But if ever a heart has found a response in truth, it can never again forget.

I think some great Spirit waits beside every event and every experience—as a good Advocate waits beside his client—to call and separate the true, the beautiful, the hopeful, the eternal out of it—freeing the truth from error—freeing us from ignorance.

April 2.—Thoughts lap my solitude like kindly seas about an ocean islet. I am not solitary while thoughts break upon my heart like waves that catch the light upon their spray.

If once more I wandered in life's ways, with thoughts and events together coming towards me, and this strange new light that has shone into my solitude bright upon both—surely in that union would be perfect joy and perfect love.

But if once more I wandered in life's ways, it would not be. Thoughts and events would travel by different paths. A yawning chasm would separate them. The Angel with the flaming sword forbids the Eden of their union.

"When the thoughts of all men shall be

made manifest." The words speak from my memory and answer my desire. Not, oh, thank God not, a rousing again of long-dead, fruitless warring of mind with mind, but a promise of a different day when life and expression again are one—as the Word of God is One with God in the mystery of the Holy Trinity—and no longer the dark veil of misunderstanding hangs between soul and soul.

April 15.—Easter has come and gone.

Once Easter was a word that broke the winter stillness. After Easter came the lure of movement, wider spaces called, the year's adventures began. Summer waited, holding promises in a mist of possibility, like the mist of green on the budding woods.

Now into my room Easter came—but with a different freedom—breaking a different winter. "Very early in the morning," the lighted candles glowed against my grey walls, above the whiteness of lilies and hyacinths. The Dweller in Joy, white-clad, with moving hands, was there. I heard the piercing sweetness of sacramental words. I knew the holiness of Sacramental Presence enfolding my spirit. A moment of rapturous peace—a

memory of eternity's contact—this was my Easter.

The whole Church spoke—just for one feeble, broken soul. The whole Church gave—to one for whom life has no more to give. Her mighty mystery—her infinite inspiration—were mine—as the sun's whole glory shines for a single field flower.

Once long ago—on the other side of the wide-cleft gulf of a year—when drawing-rooms were part of the common life and not strangely-remembered dreams, I met some one in a drawing-room, who spoke of things not often heard within drawing-room walls. It was a drawing-room in a boarding-house and others were there, but she spoke only for me. She seemed to know the answer to all the questions that hurl their way through troubled minds when a hurt has sent all the blessed familiar thoughts hurtling out into nothingness. Disillusionment had filled my heart with questions, where sweet and blessed certainties had dwelt before.

“In every soul is a small sinless centre,” she said, “where sin and evil cannot come. It is the Garden of Eden. It is the Immaculate Conception. One soul can always reach an-

other soul there, but the beginning is by ways of the Spirit, for the life of the Spirit begins there. From there man commences the mastery of matter which is his privilege. From there man commences his union with God which is his destiny. Love impels us to nothing beyond the powers which are our privilege. When God gives us Himself He gives us everything."

Remembering those words that once consoled a slighter sorrow, I find in them wisdom for a greater sorrow.

I think that sacraments, and some things so deeply loved that love has made them sacramental, are real, not in their sweet and fleeting impression, but in a deeply hidden power, so that they become a secret treasure, to be everlastingly drawn upon for their slow, unending potency. I think they pierce a way, not to mind, nor senses, nor nerves, but to that "sinless centre" increasing the life and energy hidden there. So that the true life grows from in outward—mastering an ever-widening-circle of outward things.

April 19.—A veil of green has been thrown over the tangle of brown branches I have

looked out upon all winter. The belts of gardens are at their loveliest. I can see a bridal mist of wild cherry blossom, mingling with the green.

I watched, this morning, a wet dawn silvering the sky above the houses on the cliff. There were strange gleams on wet roofs—a diamond spark on wet skylights. The call of a blackbird broke the stillness.

All day the buds have unfolded in mild, wet airs. The high branches of the trees below my window brighten to emerald, so that an emerald mist fills half the window-space that has been colourless so long. When evening came I watched the lights spangle the twilight till all the green and grey was starred with gold.

And all through the world spring's magic is at work. Its green fire is running through many woods I know. It is quickening a hundred gardens that I love. Through them the birds are calling. The owls' hoot crosses them.

But not for me. Never again for me. Spring comes, but between me and spring is no meeting. Only an eternal parting, a rending as of heart from heart.

April 29.—When morning comes again, the first hope I can summon is the hope that when my tray is carried in, there will be a letter upon it.

Letters are like people. There are some that can enter experience and change its rhythm with their entrance. And others leave one conscious of nothing but a vague sense of rebuff.

But I think the post cards break my prison best.

They come to me from many distances, flying to me, like little winged things, from all over the world, calling my thoughts to meet them. And now New York is not further than a street in an English town, Benares is not more remote than a suburb of the city in which I dwell.

Once pictures could tell me more than these pictures can ever tell. But the words written there bring more to me than words have ever brought before. They can pierce a way where eyes have forgotten how to bear their message.

Yet these little card pictures are all I can ever look to now to open for me those far, wide, wonder places of the world—each one a

tiny flame in my ignorance, like the spurt of a match in a dark room.

Amongst the many, gathered fortuitously beside me, like an unbound book of memory and adventure, is one that has a place apart.

It is a picture of Rome from the Pincian Hill. On a wide terrace in the foreground, where palms are growing, a solitary watcher stands, gazing over the panorama of Rome, so that my dimmed eyes can think they gaze upon it too, and dream of its magnificence, of that ascendant dome of great St. Peter's, of the tender beauty of surrounding hills.

Below the picture are written words by one whose grace has always been a vast self-forgetfulness and reverence before every gift of life. "The figure is not mine, but I was just as contemplative."

In all the world there is no place can bring, as Rome brings, the conviction of garnered spiritual treasure, that humbling, mysterious sense of the penetration, through man, of secrets beyond man—treasure too vast to seek out, too intricate to follow, too mighty to break up into knowledge.

So the ultimate possession is the same for one from whom all life's endowment is reced-

ing, as for one who finds himself facing wealth beyond grasp or knowledge. Contemplation has become the only union. So a single heightened hour in Rome's eternal splendour answers the dim, uncounted days, in a narrow room where deprivation dwells, and confirms that faint, subtle-sweet delight that can still fill blinded eyes, crushed heart and empty hands, with the fulness of spirit's joy.

May 4.—Last night it seemed to me that my room and all the house about me dissolved in mist and I lay upon the night itself with all the immensity of the stars above me. Life had receded to an indescribable remoteness. So frail and failing seemed the threads that bound me to it, I could not conceive the possibility that they would ever draw me back to it again. My heart and mind and all my faculties seemed to pass from me into the immensity around me. From a deep, far distance I seemed to look back on the little incident of life that had clung to me so strangely for a moment. A faint wave of memory and regret brought but a vague, light touch upon my senses. Dimly I was conscious of a mist of flowers, a drift of dreams, a fragrance of friendship, a music of

poetry, a haunting of exquisite, garnered thought. These, out of life as it has yielded itself to me, my heart has held most gladly—these I have had to love—these have been all life's sweetness to me. Out of that harvest ungathered, that union foregone, that deeper contact never to be mine—these have been the gifts of life to me.

But morning came—to draw my soul back from its wanderings—back to accept the things it cannot love. Day waits—a blank canvas, upon which only my thoughts can write.

May 6.—Still the days swing between light and darkness—the quiver of high things—the weight of affinities not yet silent.

And there are still people who can come in and silence all the finer wires. There are still the friends who can awaken them. I long, each day, to welcome those friends. They belong to that waiting, unseen, mysterious joy. I dread the entrance of the unknowing minds and destroying voices.

Strange, bewildering, amazing experience creeps up and possesses my frame and masters the day—and they seek to control it, to negate

it, by a tinkling phrase, a weariness of petty words.

They tell themselves it is the word it is well for me to hear. It is the last word it could be well for me to hear. It is the word that protects them from knowing all that I know. It is a fence of phrase, a barrier of irritation, a determined denial—lest truth sweep in and banish all their ease.

Does only pain, then, reveal the affinities that lie beyond ease? Is it only the crushing of the nearer affinities that calls them into life? Is this the true resurrection of the body?

Then sorrow is from God. It is divine knowledge. It is the gate of vision. It is God's promise of union with Himself. It is the unquenchable thirst of heart and soul and mind that tells us we wait for our true destiny. By sorrow we know the depths of life's inadequacy. We know our own incompleteness.

I see each life on earth a footprint of God—the print of a foot strangely, poignantly pierced.

May 12.—I am no longer in the little grey-walled room whose windows look out upon the

curving road to the city's entrance, and into which, at noon, the sun's rays beat directly. I have been brought to a different room, with wide windows looking northward—for so long called a guest-room that in it I feel myself something of a wayfarer, free from the bonds with which familiar things bind us to earth.

The motors do not throw their light into this room, nor does the traffic pass below it. But in those nights when no clouds are in the sky, nor mists in the air, a gleam that is like the gleam of an elfin candle falls for a fleeting moment in a little bright patch on the wall—then vanishes—to come again and vanish. Across miles of city roofs that light travels to my room, shining from the revolving lamp of an island lighthouse.

Summer is here—the long, warm days, the short, mysterious nights. I sleep and wake to lingering twilight, and sleep again and wake to daylight, and hours are yet to wait till morning though birds are twittering in the ivy on the house-walls.

Because this city rises and falls with the hills and valleys upon which it is set, I can look from my pillows over a wide stretch of sloping country, far enough to see, above the roofs and

gardens, the trees of distant woods and glimpses of an island sea and dim, blue hills beyond it. In a wide expanse of sky I can see the swifts and martins swoop. I can watch like a mighty pageant, the changing lights of dawn and noon and sunset, and the darkening of the night.

Far away my high room sets me—far from those wide spaces of land and earth and sky—but not so far as that impelling weakness that fastens me, with its sharp piercings, to my loneliness.

May 15.—In this big room my flowers are left beside me, when evening comes, to companion me through the night. I have shell-pink sweet peas, the first of the year, close at my side, and wonderful dark mauve tulips are bending from the mantel-shelf. Both were brought by one dear friend whose footsteps, through my weeks, are flowers, and I may follow that sweet trail, that is like the trail of her own love's sweetness, between visit and visit. The scentless, lovely, distant things, with their strange, starry charm, that have no message for my senses now, have become the companions of my spirit. They are the work of the

perfect artist, veiling their message in beauty, holding, in time, some of the laughter of eternity. My room would be desolate without them.

May 24.—Outside the whole world lies in languorous heat. Not far away—oh, not far away—gardens are heavy with the scent of may-blossom, of lilac, of limes. Primroses star the woods. There is lily of the valley in the hollows. Little streams are splashing under bending, new-leafed boughs.

Once again, in fields I cannot see, the poppies flame. Once again the incense of white clover fills the air.

Desire burns in my breast—a pain that kills—a fire that quickens. The faintly flickering life in me kindles to passion.

Oh, to go out—out into life once more—out into life's ways—into the summer. Oh, to seek and gather life's joys denied me—to find and hold the boons snatched from me before my hands could reach out and take them.

Not far away—oh, not far away—under the languorous sun, wrapped in the summer scents and the humming summer air, all I desire is

and lives. All I can never have is yet there—with prodigal riches for other hands. The young corn and the poppies flame. Wild thyme is crushed under moving feet. Noon is strong and splendid. Remembered eyes, that never again can look into mine—under summer sunrays, in the scent of flowers—look into other eyes. But never again into mine, save in those dreams that break my heart in waking. Voices speak. Strong with invoking magic remembered voices speak—but never again with magic for my heart, never again with music for my mind.

In this tormenting sorrow of love and memory—this anguish of desire for all I have been given heart and hands to hold, yet may not have, nor ever know again—I long for bodily pain to blot the other anguish out, and possess, even with its fierce cruelty, this empty, frustrate frame that now may know no other fulfilment.

May 24.—Night comes and long hours lie between me and the fevered noon.

In the sky is a still and wonderful beauty—black and purple clouds curtaining a gold and silver infinity.

The kindly gloom fills my room, my flowers shine in it—little ghostly presences.

But not the night, nor the flowers, not the silencing of voices, nor relief of solitude have called this deep stillness into my spirit.

It is a deeper stillness than any night can bring. Thoughts shine in its shadows as pale flowers shine in dusky woods.

Gone is the agony of separation—the fire of desire—the frustration of love and memory. The gathering darkness, the brooding stillness bring me life and union again.

To all for whom the summer day has held the fulness of its joy, as for me—night comes—with separating touch—with imperious stillness.

For all, whom life endows and claims and gladdens, the greater night, that closes life itself with purpling shadows, waits—the great detachment—the transcending silence.

I am not alone in sorrow and desire, in love and frustration—in longing that, each hour, beats up against denial.

To all, in every hour of every day, life gives and takes away—life quickens and denies. There is no heart whose wishes do not fly out

beyond fulfilment—to return, and fall, and fail.

Their unfulfilment is the witness of their destiny.

In this hush of night and spirit—that enfolds me like a cherishing Life, with brooding gentle wings of love upon my soul—faith runs into my heart again.

Once the primrose was mine.

If I must be far away from it—and still far away even though my languid fingers touched it, still I can hold its memory in my heart and ponder that sweet message its beauty writes upon the earth for all to read.

Once beloved eyes looked into mine.

For God's eternal purpose they looked into mine. I shall have that purpose through eternity.

With the passing of the languorous day, from my heart has passed the fierceness of desire, and all the untrue, the foolish, and the wrong.

I know the things that belong to my true destiny. I know they will be mine eternally.

The world's beauty pierces me and holds me to this cross of love and pain—that would not

be such pain but for the love that breaks my heart with memory and regret. Yet it is the piercing of union, not of separation.

The night is whispering her secrets to me in the deepening purple of her shadows.

The primroses, the woods, the running waters, the heavy scents of flower-filled gardens all are far away. But near me is a touch closer than theirs—a fragrance sweeter wraps my spirit.

Pain and longing have become as some great pressure that does not crush but raises—raises me into strange fragrances, strange possession, strange sorrow, stranger ecstasy.

May 29.—The long summer days go past—a bitter-sweet possession. There are heavy-headed rose-peonies in my room and the cool green and white of Solomon's Seal.

From my far place on high-raised pillows I look over the wide land with the sunlight upon it—over to the far line of the hills beyond the inland sea, that wear the distance like a garment of blue mist.

Life out in the world, the life acknowledged to be life, seems as far away, as unreachable.

I think, sometimes, that that life of doing,

seeing, planning, with uncounted things ready to run towards impulses and desires and answer them—and this life of hush and nothingness, where hours drift by to break like empty bubbles, and no answer can come to the little throb of wishes that beat all day—cannot both be real. A single world cannot hold both. A single frame cannot know both. One must be illusion.

So wonderful it looks—that great majestic life that I may ponder, but may never have again—that if I died of a broken heart, regretting it—the tribute to its loveliness, its splendour and its poignancy would make the death worth while. My life would be yielded up to give assent to its desirability.

But the life that I have is true. It is a life that the world has held since it held man.

I cannot think of the long hospital wards, nor of remote, unknown sick-rooms—nor of crushed, sorrowing hearts that bear no outward sign of sorrow—and believe them to be but the failure of experience—the separation from reality—the falling from truth.

All down the ages pain has had its own servants.

Whatever that deep secret is, so strangely

held in the strange life of this planet, certain it is that some of its great mystery can only be told by pain.

May 30.—I think that joy and sadness are like sun and rain. But the reality is in the sun and the joy; sadness and rain are but the servants of its perfection. The garden is a real garden only in the sunshine (oh, the sodden sadness of a garden in the rain). The soul enters its true kingdom in joy; but in sorrow it has gathered its power to answer joy and its sensibility to recognise it. It has found its own beauty to match it.

Last night—again—I woke in the hour that holds the short summer darkness—and that darkness was filled with joy. It met my inmost heart, as the darkness met my eyes. It drew me deeper and deeper into itself, and I knew that the joy of God holds all things within itself—and illness and desolation, silence and helplessness, are all included in it. Some day we shall find them in their true place—discords rearranged to harmonies. And they will be our heritage—they will be part of the Joy of God.

Some time, mysteriously, Man's will and

pleasure took God's treasures to use them for himself—and finding them lifeless without God, drew upon Evil to give them life. And then, those treasures became—in Time—terrible. We know them terrible upon our broken nerves. But some day God will take them back. Then again, they will be joy. As my dark hours are joy, when, mysteriously, that unimagined joy releases me, and all my fears are lost, and only love is real.

Now, as I lie helpless, I think of all the beautiful, helpless things, hidden in every human heart, bound under some hard fear that will not let them be free—and I am glad that love and pain are strong enough to break that fear.

June 3.—Now again enters the month—once a month of pleasure—whose gifts and gladness last year failed me, for ever. It is the month that called me away from the open fields and the pleasure—into a dark room—to be told a dreadful secret.

Very far away are now the fields and the festival. But I have not been in a dark room. The secret I have learnt is not a dreadful one. My footsteps cannot lead me towards life's

open fields and pleasure places. But my thoughts can wing a wider way and reach remoter distances than life's great ways ever opened to them. There is a secret in my heart whose unfolding makes everything in all the universe my own. If the walls of a single room enclose me, those walls are set

"In deep mid-silence, opendoor'd to God."

When my steps were free, and my seeking heart and hands directed them, I never sought such deep desires, such sweet fulfilment, such profound possession, as those that have entered, unsought, into my concealment to bless my helplessness.

I believed there could be no deeper, better joy than the joy in nature, no profounder, nor nearer knowledge of God. I believed there could be no sweeter joy in love than the dear human love of touch and voice, and the magic of personality. Joy of nature left my tired heart. Nerves could no longer receive and answer it. And joy came to me, piercing and real, making the old joy dull and clumsy in comparison. I have known a far greater human love—a remembered look—a sudden knowledge—an ineffable presence—come and

gone—reaching me across renouncement's gulf, but, beyond look and touch an endowment—the piercing of eternity in love's companionship.

Could I go back and forget it?

To lose it would be a greater loss than the loss I have already known.

Dear as the earth life was, with dear response of heart to heart, of mood to mood—the response of spirit to spirit is dearer.

The light behind the mystery grows so real I cannot believe I am the same person, who, a year ago, rebelled.

A mysterious life flows in upon me. Strangely, subtly, differently, it reaches me. Under it all I love and know changes, but with a change that is like the change of light, creeping upon the earth as night passes, changing the grey dawn to the ecstasy of sunrise.

Not death, not denial dwell in my far room, but life and sweet assurance and knowledge quick with eternal wisdom.

June 13.—This month knows no night. Day passes through an hour of silver twilight into day again. The sundown lingers till the dawn appears.

There are roses in my room—crimson, yellow and pink. Amongst the roses are the little green spears of rosemary. They come from a suburban garden where flowers are often gathered for me, and whenever they are gathered the rosemary is cut and added to them, because I once revealed my love for it. Sometimes I fancy its pungence reaches even my remoteness, though the roses stay far away.

But the roses dream through the noons when pain crushes me—they wake and speak when pain leaves me and freedom comes again. Their beauty tells me what the breath of the rosemary bears to me. The early dawns speak the same language; the late sunsets write it on the sky. Sometimes a strange wisdom prints it straight upon my tired frame. From them all the same secret reaches me. It is the secret I left the festival to hear. It is the secret of joy.

There are other witnesses. I meet the secret in printed words—in remembered poems—in Bible sayings—in beauty left on earth by work of man. I meet it sometimes in eyes that seek mine, and I wonder how those eyes caught its wisdom into their tenderness. I hear it in the hush and stillness of prayer—in

the music of sacramental words—in the miracle of sacramental Presence. I know it in the pure, wordless joy of rapturous certainties—of ecstatic adoration. I recognise it in the slow unclasping of dark and different, alien affinities—in the release from crushing bitterness.

If once again I were well—there would be much to miss. If I left behind me all a single room has held, it would be more than I left to come to it. There are fires in this life for want of which the world might seem cold. “Ah me, renunciation is not cold. It hath a flame. God knows it is not cold.”

June 23.—Once—and in time, not very long ago—the mystery before me was the mystery of life. I did not know it. I had not wisdom with which to anticipate it, save a garnering of dreams that wilted and failed when life's airs touched them. I looked out at it, waiting for it in the unfolding of the days, my asking mind seeking every morning, every spring-tide, to know what it held for me. It clasped me close, reaching me in those apportioned ways, that often seemed to stay its fulness rather than invite it. Beyond those ways that were

my ways—what surged that I might not have, nor ever know? Dreadful things it held, but wonders too—and great and vast things that could sweep a small self away from all its anchors—into experience unimaginable—yielding the great dignity—the mysterious potency—of Life.

Now I have been swept away from all my anchors. The morning and the spring-time have revealed their gifts for me. A vast experience has taken me into itself. The little barriers, fencing the dreadful things, and, with those things fencing, often, life itself away, are shattered. The great tides of Destiny have rushed upon them—and borne me away from careful hands—from the apportioned ways—from all the measures, the returns, the enclosures.

And still I gaze out and wonder what day will bring me—what mystery, yet, is hidden from me behind the dark, concealing curtain that life itself has become. What vastness of destiny—what renewed experience waits to gather me into itself, and claim and win unknown response from me, when that last, wavering curtain fails and life—this life—fails with it?

There presses in upon me a sure confidence, a strange, near sweetness, unknown to life's past spring-tides.

Heart and will find their way across the misty barriers between life and life. Hope changes its aim and sends its shafts to pierce those mists. Beauty—charm—love itself go before me. I watch them go, and from the greater mystery beyond my vision I hear them call. I feel my own heart's answer.

Out of that vastness, in which my life is held, as the world around me is held, a shaft of love and knowledge, like a shaft of light, has pierced a way to me.

It fastens the life I know to the life I have yet to know. It binds me to the life I have loved so well, while it is the path upon which I travel away from it. It shines before me but it shines behind me too. All I have loved is mine. Past love and knowledge were the gleams of this light's leadings in my life. It is Life, as I have known and desired it—as I know and desire and pursue it still.

June 29.—Morning comes. It is four o'clock.

A matchless ecstasy of creeping dawn is stealing over sky and roofs.

There is peace beyond peace, fulfilment beyond fulfilment, content incomparable in its grey presence.

Now I have a hunger in my heart towards that hidden, approaching, potent Mystery, greater than any desire I ever knew towards life.

Oh, heart of joy—oh, gladness beyond thought—might I capture it for ever and know it mine—pain then would be nothingness, would be but a passing jar of receding ignorance, in face of this. What have my days become but God-given joy, when, at any sudden, unlooked-for moment, I may wake and find myself in heaven?

If I were free, what could I do with freedom—but seek in all things the Joy that came to me in captivity?

If it reached me in spoken words, or looked out upon me from beloved eyes, or if it sprang into my heart straight out of that vast mystery enfolding life, with never a channel of experience to bear it to me, but only its sweetness in my spirit to convince me of it—it would yet be the same joy. It would be the supreme,

inevitable, transcending aim of the life that beats, beats in ceaseless desire within me.

There would be nothing else in all the world to seek.

All things that ever lured could only fall away or impede and trouble, confusing that one aim by clamant call upon affinities I only long to silence, now, for ever.

I look no more to life for freedom.

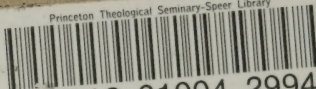
It would be captivity, not freedom, when, with every dawn I know, the bonds that hold me are snapping one by one.

Heart — hands — thoughts — desires — are free.

Oh, Freedom of Eternity—endowment of All. What piercing pain matters so that freedom comes?

Not I, but the bonds that hold me, are pierced.

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